IN THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the Application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) In a computer, a method for obtaining resource usage information from a node of a network, the method comprising the steps of:

generating, for a data element, a value for a parameter within the data element that will cause the node of the network to determine that the data element is stale when the node of the network receives the data element;

sending the data element to the node of the network, wherein the step of sending the data element to the node includes the step of providing, within the data element, a destination address which targets a device that is different than the node to route the data element in a direction leading to the device through the node; and

receiving a signal from the node of the network, the signal including (i) an indication that the node of the network has removed the data element from the network, and (ii) resource usage information describing usage of resources within the node of the network, wherein the step of receiving the signal includes the step of obtaining, as the signal, a packetized communication having a history which identifies processing of the data element as a non-stale data element by the node even though the data element is stale by the time the node receives the data element.

Claims 2-4 (Canceled).

5. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for obtaining resource usage information from a node of a network, comprising:

a network interface for connecting to the network; and

a controller coupled to the network interface, the controller being configured to:

generate, for a data element, a value for a parameter within the data element that will cause the node of the network to determine that the data element is stale when the node of the network receives the data element,

send the data element to the node of the network through the network interface, wherein the controller, when sending the data element to the node, is configured to provide, within the data element, a destination address which targets a device that is different than the node to route the data element in a direction leading to the device through the node, and

receive a signal from the node of the network, the signal including (i) an indication that the node of the network has removed the data element from the network, and (ii) resource usage information describing usage of resources within the node of the network, wherein controller, when receiving the signal, is configured to obtain, as the signal, a packetized communication having a history which identifies processing of the data element as a non-stale data element by the node even though the data element is stale by the time the node receives the data element.

Claims 6-10 (Canceled).

11. (Currently Amended) In a node of a network, a method for providing resource usage information, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving a data element from a source computer of the network, wherein the step of receiving the data element includes the step of obtaining, within the data element, a destination address which targets a device that is different than the node to route the data element in a direction leading to the device through the node;

determining that the data element is stale based on a parameter within the data element; and

removing the data element from the network and sending a signal to the source computer of the network, the signal including (i) an indication that the node of the network has removed the data element from the network, and (ii) resource usage information describing usage of resources within the node of the network, wherein the step of removing the data element form the network and sending the signal includes the step of providing, as the signal, a packetized communication having a history which identifies processing of the data element as a non-stale data element by the node even though the data element is stale by the time the node receives the data element.

Claims 12-14 (Canceled).

15. (Currently Amended) A network node for providing resource usage information, comprising:

a network interface for connecting to a network; and

a controller coupled to the network interface, the controller being configured to:

receive a data element from a source computer of the network through the network interface, wherein the controller, when receiving the data element, is configured to obtain, within the data element, a destination address which targets a device that is different than the node to route the data element in a direction leading to the device through the node;

determine that the data element is stale based on a parameter within the data element; and

remove the data element from the network and send a signal to the source computer of the network through the network interface, the signal including (i) an indication that the node of the network has removed the data element from the network, and (ii) resource usage information describing usage of resources within the node of the network, wherein the controller, when removing the data element form the network and sending the signal, is configured to provide, as the signal, a packetized communication having a history which identifies processing of the data element as a non-stale data element by the node even though the data element is stale by the time the node receives the data element.

Claims 16-42 (Canceled).